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REMARKS

Claims 1-36 are currently pending in the subject application and are presently under consideration. Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 17, 25, 32, and 36 have been amended herein. A marked-up version of claim amendments made herein is found on pages 2-10 of this Reply.

Favorable reconsideration of the subject patent application is respectfully requested in view of the comments and amendments herein.

I. Claim Objections

Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 17, and 25 are objected to for various informalities. The subject claims have been amended herein to incorporate the Examiner's suggested corrections. However, with regard to the Examiner's suggestion that all occurrences of "and/or" be replaced with --or--, applicants' representative respectfully submits that replacing "and/or" with --at least one of...and-- appropriately corrects the informalities objected to by the Examiner. Furthermore, it is respectfully submitted that the plural "barcodes" recited in claim 7 is proper in view of the dependence of claim 7 from claim 1 and the antecedent basis recited therein.

In view of the above, it is respectfully requested that the objections to the subject claims be withdrawn.

II. Rejection of Claims 1-36 Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1-36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hashimoto (US 6,018,688). Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested for at least the following reasons. Hashimoto does not disclose each and every element of applicants' invention as set forth in the subject claims.

"A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described in a single prior art reference." *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ 2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). "The identical invention must be shown in as complete detail as is contained in the...claim."

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Richardson v. Suzuki Motor Co., 868 F.2d 1226, 9 USPQ2d 1913, 1920 (Fed. Cir. 1989).

The present invention relates generally to inventory control, and in particular to systems and methods for facilitating inventory control of wafer products and circuits marked with a barcode. Independent claim 1 recites, "A system for performing inventory control, comprising: *one or more inventories adapted to store* at least one of wafers, unpackaged circuits and packaged circuits, where the wafers are suitable for processing into integrated circuits, and where at least one of the wafers, the unpackaged circuits and the packaged circuits are marked with one or more barcodes; one or more barcode readers operable to read one or more barcodes on at least one of the wafers, the unpackaged circuits and the packaged circuits; and *one or more sorters adapted to route at least one of wafers, unpackaged circuits and packaged circuits to one or more inventories based*, at least in part, on information encoded by the one or more barcodes." Independent claims 14, 16, 27, 28, 32, 35, and 36 set forth similar aspects. According to the subject application, "The *wafer 100* is marked with a barcode 110." (Page 7, lines 19-20.) "The *barcode 210 facilitates locating a wafer 200* to process and *determining to which device the wafer 200 should be routed* by facilitating locating stored information about the wafer 200." (Page 8, lines 24-26.) Thus, the present invention utilizes a *bar code on a wafer* to access and update processing information associated with the wafer and then selectively routes the wafer according to the manufacturing requirements of the wafer. Hashimoto does not disclose such elements of applicants' invention as recited in the subject independent claims.

Hashimoto describes a system wherein "the input/output terminals a, b, c, ..., n are each equipped with optical reading means (not shown) for *reading a barcode 12 from a carrier 11* that conveys the wafer 10 between production processes in the clean room." (Column 3, lines 32-36.) Thus, each wafer 10 must have its own carrier 11 with barcode 12 thereon in order for the Hashimoto system to function properly, which increases production cost and decreases wafer throughput. Furthermore, Hashimoto merely discusses determining *whether or not to load a wafer onto a working device once the wafer reaches the working device*. (See, e.g., Column 3, lines 39-43: "When the wafer 10

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on the carrier 11, reaches a working device... the input/output terminal [at the working device]...reads optically the barcode 12 from the carrier 11.") Such aspects of Hashimoto inherently require that the wafer/carrier combination of Hashimoto must visit each working device before a the system can make a determination of whether or not the wafer should be loaded onto the working device, further increasing production cost and total manufacture time. Conversely, the subject claims set forth a sorter that proactively *routes* wafers depending on their respective processing requirements, as determined from information associated with a *barcode located on the wafer* itself. Thus, the present system can bypass a working device if the information associated with the barcode on the wafer indicates that the wafer does not require the particular action provided by the working device.

In view of at least the above, it is readily apparent that Hashimoto does not anticipate or make obvious the present invention as recited in independent claims 1, 14, 16, 27, 28, 32, 35, and 36 (and claims 2-13, 15, 17-26, 29-31, 33, and 34, which depend respectively there from). This rejection should be withdrawn.

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III. CONCLUSION

The present application is believed to be in condition for allowance in view of the above comments and amendments. A prompt action to such end is earnestly solicited.

In the event any fees are due in connection with this document, the Commissioner is authorized to charge those fees to Deposit Account No. 50-1063.

Should the Examiner believe a telephone interview would be helpful to expedite favorable prosecution, the Examiner is invited to contact applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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